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ABSTRACT

At five public hearings in San Francisco, Atlanta, Denver, Boston, and Cincinnati, representatives of state and local governments and of public and private education systems and other interested witnesses were asked for their viewpoints on three questions: (1) the role of the federal government in American education; (2) the effects of Chapter 2--the Block Grant provisions--of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981; and (3) tuition tax credit proposals. A summary of viewpoints on the three agenda questions is provided, followed by the council's recommendations for further inquiry and study of education in the intergovernmental setting. The appendix contains a list of hearings participants and of those who submitted testimony in writing. (MLF)

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EA 017 133

THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL BALANCE IN EDUCATION

THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL BALANCE IN EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INTERGOVERNMENTAL ADVISORY
COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

1983

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Norman A. Murdock, VICE CHAIRMAN
Elizabeth Z. Doyle, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Honorable T. H. Bell
Secretary of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

It is my pleasure on behalf of the Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Education to submit a report, "The Intergovernmental Balance in Education."

The Council's central purpose is to make recommendations to you, Mr. Secretary, and the President concerning intergovernmental policies in education. It is further directed to provide a forum for the discussion of educational issues.

This report is based on five public hearings held by the Council in San Francisco, Atlanta, Denver, Boston, and Cincinnati. Representatives of State and local governments, of public and private education systems, and other interested witnesses were asked for their considered viewpoints on three questions: (1) The role of the Federal Government in American education; (2) The effects of Chapter 2—the Block Grant provisions—of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981; and (3) Tuition tax credit proposals.

The report is a summary of these hearings plus the Council's recommendations for further inquiry and study of education in the intergovernmental setting.

It is our hope that these findings and recommendations will help nourish the grassroots crusade for excellence in education so successfully begun by you and the President.

Very truly yours,

Joseph C. Harder

Joseph C. Harder
Chairman

PART I—BACKGROUND

In the past eighteen months, numerous studies on the quality of education in the United States have been published, the most notable of which is "A Nation at Risk." Each was sufficiently different in tone and approach to stand on its merits. Nevertheless, each more nearly corroborated than conflicted with the others; the findings were not reassuring. Interestingly, a number of the reports were privately funded.

The studies resulted in lengthy analyses by newspapers, journals and television. For the time being, at least, local school problems or progress are being given more attention.

What follows is a somewhat different report by the Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Education (IACE).

The Council

In 1979, the same Public Law 96-88 creating the Department of Education also established the Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Education.

It has twenty members, appointed by the President for terms not to exceed four years. The present membership is as follows:

*ROBERTA T. ANDERSON** Vermillion, South Dakota, Dean of the School of Education at the University of South Dakota.

WILLIAM S. BANOWSKY Norman, Oklahoma, President of the University of Oklahoma.

ALAN L. CROPSEY DeWitt, Michigan, State Senator from Michigan.

ESTHER R. GREENE Sacramento, California, Chief Deputy Director, Employment Development Department for the State of California.

*EMLYN I. GRIFFITH** Rome, New York, Attorney at Law and member of the State Board of Regents.

* Members of the Executive Committee.

*JOSEPH C. HARDER** Moundridge, Kansas, State Senator from Kansas.

VANCE R. KELLY Londonderry, New Hampshire, Commissioner of Labor for the State of New Hampshire.

JOSEPH L. KNUTSON Moorhead, Minnesota, President Emeritus of Concordia College.

BARBARA C. MARUMOTO Honolulu, Hawaii, State Representative from Hawaii.

JACQUELINE E. MCGREGOR Lansing, Michigan, State Vice-Chairwoman for the Michigan Republican Party; classroom teacher and school Board member.

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DALTON SHEPPARD, JR. Columbia, South Carolina, State Representative from South Carolina; President and owner of Credit Data Corporation.

GEORGE N. SMITH Mesa, Arizona, Superintendent of Mesa Unified Schools.

JAMES B. TATUM Anderson, Missouri, President of Tatum Motor Company and President, Board of Trustees, Crowder College.

MARY C. TUCKER Washington, D.C., Chairman of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4-B.

M. JOYCE VAN SCHAACK Tarzana, California, Special Assistant to the Chairman of the California Republican Party and Instructor at the Los Angeles Mission College.

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GONZALO A. VELEZ West Orange, New Jersey, National Chairman of the Congress of Filipino-American Citizens.

HARRIETT M. WIEDER Huntington Beach, California, Supervisor for the Second District of the Orange County (California) Board of Supervisors and Chairman of the Board.

The President by law designates the Chairman, who is State Senator Joseph C. Harder of Kansas. The Under Secretary of Education, Dr. Gary L. Jones, is a member ex officio.

Its Purpose

The key to understanding the purpose of the Council is "intergovernmental," a term with small meaning in most countries other than the United States. It refers to the web of relationships resulting from our political-Constitutional arrangement of government. This federalism seems to be steadily changing, yet stubbornly and by our deliberate choice remains the same: "an indestructible union of indestructible states," wherein most day-to-day public services are provided by autonomous local governments. Elementary and secondary education is one such service.

The law creating the Council reflects this. The Council is directed to "make recommendations to the Secretary (of Education) and the President concerning intergovernmental policies and relations relating to education."

First among its specific duties is "to provide a forum for representatives of Federal, State and local governments and public and private educational entities to discuss educational issues."

The Sources of This Report: Public Hearings

To comply with this directive, the public hearing format was adopted. The Council held five hearings from February through June 1983, in San Francisco, Atlanta, Denver, Boston, and Cincinnati. These were open to all, including "walk-in" witnesses.

Council members are not part of the Federal bureaucracy and live throughout the United States. They depend on a small—and competent—staff provided by the Department of Education in Washington. The hearings' purpose, however, required neither large professional staffs nor supporting funds so necessary for the other various reports that have been issued.

The Council saw as its function to listen to men and women from states or localities with direct responsibility for public elementary/secondary education, those from similar private education systems and, finally, those from the weave of groups influencing educational policy at national, state and local levels.

A Gusher of Viewpoints

Before the hearings began, registered witnesses were informed they would have at least ten minutes for oral presentations. That the Council was tapping a gusher of opinions far beyond expectations became evident at the first hearing. There, and at all later hearings, most witnesses were held to five minutes for oral testimony plus time for questions. As in certain other situations, however, such a limitation "wonderfully concentrates the mind." Our transcripts show a refreshing directness by most witnesses. (In addition, many written statements were received.)

Witnesses were quite aware that broad and thorough studies of American education were being readied for publication. And perhaps this was the first relatively calm interval in 25 years when such appraisal not only could be prepared but would be listened to and debated by the general public.

The Agenda: An Explanation

The Council selected three topics to be addressed by the witnesses:

A. The role of the Federal government in education
B. The effects of Chapter 2—the Block Grant provisions—of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) of 1981.
C. Tuition tax credit proposals.

Why these three? What do they have to do with teaching and learning; with the quality of education?

The Council has no such broad and freely selected directives as those preparing the other reports. By law the Council's first concern was to measure the effect of Federal programs on state/local school systems, listening principally to those who lived and worked in that intergovernmental network.

The American school systems, while part of a national vision, have in practice been of intense local concern. Their pupils, teachers, and curricula have been nourished out of that concern. Any change in that process beyond the State level is of serious import. As due process is vital to civil liberties, so proper procedures are necessary to maintain the right intergovernmental mix for elementary/secondary education.

Through this agenda, the Council invited (1) general statements to provide future guidance on the proper contribution of the Federal government to elementary/secondary education in America—help without eroding the delicate intergovernmental balance; (2) comparisons of past Federal policies wherein assistance was provided to local systems through categorical grants, with changes recently enacted by Congress at the request of the President, i.e., consolidation of 28 such programs into one block grant; and (3) commentary on the tuition tax credit proposal endorsed by the President and, at the time, still before Congress.

PART II—FINDINGS

These findings are a summary of viewpoints on the three agenda questions; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Council.

A. The Role of the Federal Government in Education

1. A General Proposition

   a. State responsibility and local function

      The great majority of witnesses agreed that in terms of the intergovernmental mix, education is a state responsibility and a local function. This long-standing partnership serves education best when bolstered by strong parental participation, particularly at the level of the individual school, and by support from the many groups interested in the civic health of their communities.

   b. The Federal role is to assist that partnership

      The majority agreed the Federal government can provide leadership in identifying educational needs of the nation. In turn, this serves to remind the nation of the importance of sound educational systems for American democracy.

2. Specific Federal Activities

   a. The great majority endorsed the collection, analysis, and dissemination of useful information about American education, as well as comparisons with educational systems elsewhere. Any study of education in America, whether broad- or narrow-gauge is heavily dependent on such data.

   b Most witnesses endorsed Federal funding of sound research and laboratory studies to improve teaching and learning, by the National Institute of Education, or colleges and universities.

c. The majority approved special Federal assistance to improve the teaching of mathematics, science, and foreign languages.

d. The majority agreed Federal funding for vocational education as well as special assistance for handicapped, disadvantaged, and high cost pupils, should continue as separate categorical grant programs.

e. Views were mixed on merit pay and master teacher proposals. In any event, the majority questioned Federal involvement.

B. The Effect of Chapter 2—the Block Grant provisions—under the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) of 1981

The Council's primary interest was the intergovernmental balance.

Here perspective is important. While impressive, total Federal spending for education is relatively small compared to total State and local expenditures, averaging six to eight percent of most school district budgets. The ever-present question, then, is whether or not the Federal tail wags the State/local dog.

Most witnesses supported change to the Chapter 2 Block Grant, agreeing the new design reduced paper work, eliminated grantsmanship, and returned flexibility and responsibility to the states and to local school districts.

"You have heard about the camel being a horse designed by a committee. This (Chapter 2-Block Grant) was a horse designed by a committee that is winning the derby."

Jim Curran, Director of Instruction/Englewood School District; Administrator of District Block Grant; Spokesman for Legislative Committee, Colorado Association of School Executives.

"Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it seems that we were constantly sending personnel to workshops to learn how to apply for grants or how to review administrative procedures. This has been cut drastically. . . . .We can see more money being spent on education and less money on bureaucracy at the Federal, State and local level. . . . ."

Ray Bass, Assistant to Superintendant, DeKalb County Schools, Georgia. (Largest school district in state—70,000 students).

Nevertheless, there were specific criticisms from those endorsing the block grant approach in general.

1. Many urban district representatives objected to cuts in funding levels, particularly the loss of ESEA voluntary desegregation funds. They argued they were complying with a Federal policy and suggested amendments to restore funds to complete the task.
2. Many administrators were concerned about the lack of more specific Federal guidelines, particularly as to audit procedures. They asked if additional regulations might be imposed in the future, to be applied retroactively.
3. A number of public school officials objected to providing services to private school students under Chapter 2, particularly in view of other reductions in Federal funding. Private school administrators found such services to be of great assistance to their students.

C. Tuition Tax Credit Proposals

There were sharp differences of opinion about tuition tax credit proposals, and persuasive arguments were heard from proponents and opponents.

It should be noted these hearings were concluded prior to the Supreme Court decision upholding the Minnesota tax deduction plan, and the U.S. Senate's rejection of a tuition tax proposal.

See Recommendations for further comment on this subject.

PART III—RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council proposes two sets of recommendations. It intends further hearings to make additional findings and recommendations on some of these. The rest could better be carried forward by organizations with greater resources and staff. Some warrant consideration and action at the earliest possible time.

A. Recommendations Directly Related to Agenda Topics

1. Further monitoring of the block grant program to determine if the improvements cited in our findings have continued and, in particular, if the problem of guidelines has been resolved.

2. A determination as to whether other categorical grant programs should be folded into the Chapter 2 Block Grant.

3. A study of the effect on teacher education of assistance formulas and funding under the ECIA of 1981.

4. Analysis of the Minnesota tax deduction plan, in view of the educational contributions of private schools.

B. Additional Recommendations

These are in response to matters not directly related to the agenda but which surfaced as a result of the hearings.

1. A study of the "partnership" concept, involving schools, parents, and the private sector, with attention to such matters as sharing of expertise to enrich school curricula, accrediting part-time teachers, cost-effectiveness, and new technologies.

2. Analysis of the impact of national policies on the education systems of particular states or regions, e.g., with respect to immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, and Native Americans.

3. Further research on more effective use of instructional learning time.

4. A study of the effectiveness of education in terms of the nation's future needs. This is a "quality" question. It would include incentives to attract and retain superior teachers and, at the other end, the disgraceful rate of functional illiteracy not only for dropouts, but for high school graduates as well.

C. Mandates or the School as the "Philosopher's Stone"*

*(An imaginary stone, substance or chemical preparation believed to have the power to transmute baser metals into gold, provide a universal cure for disease, and prolong life indefinitely, sought by medieval alchemists.)

At the first hearing in San Francisco, Arizona's State Superintendent of Instruction Carolyn Warner recited a litany of mandates laid onto the schools with generous abandon by parents, interest groups, school boards, city, county and State governments, and the Federal government. She identified fifty-six mandates, then added as number fifty-seven, "We also teach reading, writing, arithmetic."

There was frequent mention of this burden by other witnesses, more in a tone of resignation than indignation.

The Council has no doubt each mandate would find stout defenders. Many can be folded into the regular curricula; many cannot. They mean teaching time taken from both the "three R's" and from their more sophisticated counterparts in secondary education.

Principals and teachers are not parents, clergymen, policemen, or psychosomatic healers. Schools are not substitutes for government, nor magical healing centers for the latest social woes.

To be required to assume so many extraneous roles trivializes the central purpose of schools, renders the teachers' actions ridiculous, and confuses the students.

The practice gives parents and all the official and unofficial bodies responsible a false sense of security and accomplishment. When schools falter under such a burden, they become an easy target for blame.

School administrators and school board members cannot be entirely absolved from this confusion of purposes. They have been too passive in allowing schools to be saddled with such tasks or too eager to accept them in order to become "relevant."

The present time gives evidence of serious, disciplined self-renewal by those who staff our school systems, across the country.

> "The difference for me between the sixties and the eighties is that in the sixties I knew where I wanted to go with the students and the money was supposed to be used. . .to get me there. Unfortunately, I don't think I knew how to get there. I didn't have the path. I think over the last 15 or 20 years what we have learned is also how to get there, and what is important in education again."

Robert Peterkin, teacher, principal, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Boston.

Great credit for this new spirit is due "A Nation at Risk" and similar reports.

The Council believes its final recommendation melds with this new spirit. It urges parents, interest groups, local, State, and Federal governments to clear the path of renewal by peeling away this overgrowth which smothers effective teaching and genuine learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to express particular appreciation to Martin J. Clancy for his work in preparing this report, and to the Council staff: Elizabeth Z. Doyle, Executive Director; Laverne Johnson, Staff Assistant, who assisted in setting up the various public hearings; and Naomie Smith, Secretary, who typed the many draft versions of this manuscript.

Others who assisted us in our work included Dr. Theresa H. Marshall and regional personnel in the various cities.

We sincerely appreciate, too, the support and cooperation provided by the offices of the Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary for Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs.

Finally, we are most grateful to those who testified in person or presented written testimony at the five public hearings.

APPENDIX

List of Hearings Participants and Those Who Submitted Testimony in Writing

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Richmond Unified School District

Billy Alexander
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